

The problem

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Why should Yachtrecycling be needed? Where is the problem?

Landfill: A mass of recreational boats is reaching their end of life.

In our days, several millions of sailing and motor yachts are in use worldwide. Many of them only a few days to weeks a year, others much more frequently. For a long time the majority of pleasure yachts consisted in big part of either wood or steel – both materials which are rather straightforward to recycle. More recent yachts, however, are made of polyester, reinforced by glass – the so called fibreglass. That materials is extremely durable and requires special tools and expertise to be recycled.

To date there is **only a small number of companies specialised in general vehicle dismantling works**. These works include prevalently road vehicles and motor- or sailyachts on a more occasional base, with the **yachts getting treated as bulk garbage** then. Such partial dismantling is **all but a sustainable solution** though: Dismantling here appears to take insufficiently into account hazardous waste and toxic substances freed during works. Also, despite availability of second hand boat components via a small number of websites and centres, a systematic, continuous and structured recycling of components and materials is not yet practised.

The problem is a global one. A brief comparing look at the situation in various European countries reveals this: Currently, about 700.000 recreational ships are registered in each country. Of these, several additional thousands enter the market each year while a comparable number of yachts reach their end of life; in other words: They are ready for getting disposed of.

But unlike the computer hardware or automotive industries, the **nautical leisure industry** simply **lacks appropriate structures** and best practice knowledge for sustainable disposal of sailing yachts at their end of life.

There also exist **no clear regulations yet** which would regulate, leave alone enforce such sustainable sailyacht disposal: An almost surreal situation, seen the pressing, ubiquitous environmental crises which are object of widespread media reporting in our days.

Consequences of this situation become visible with growing frequency, not only in marinas. Sailyacht maintenance is a cost-intensive practice, costs often grow proportional to a yacht's lifetime. Many boat owners run out of money and other resources at a certain point. While others recognise further maintenance of their yacht as pointless because necessary way too frequently or too intense in terms of workload. At this point, several main variations of wrong sailyacht handling are known to be practised:

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Yachts simply getting abandoned in marinas at their end of life, their owners vanished (The Netherlands have no registration obligation for boat owners yet), never to make themselves heard again. Other more responsible boat owners, once run out of money and time, deliberately give their boat to marina managers, as counter value for unpaid fees. Marina managers in both cases remain with the disposal problem. They often enough 'solve' it by letting sailyachts rot in berths or elsewhere in the marina area for years, hoping all the time for someone interested in the yachts to appear. Eventually, the yachts get disposed of as 'bulk garbage'.

Many yachts are intentionally getting abandoned somewhere in coastal areas, far from marinas or residences. Polluting the areas where they lay. Especially Norway, a country where sailyachts are almost as widely used as cars, faces this problem.

Treating yachts at their end of life as 'bulk garbage', letting them rot away or abandoning them altogether means to accept, without taking counter-measures, more or less gradual leakage of aforesaid toxic substances and materials into the environment.

What is missing:

Sustainable and accessible services offered by the nautical industry, as viable alternative.

Service offers from the field: Dismantling stations, with extracted materials and components then being offered to the recycling industry especially also for fibreglass.

Regulations aimed to enforce recycling practices. With environmental regulations getting increasingly stricter and valid across countries and industry sectors, such regulations are expected to arrive rather soon.

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